ACTION AGENDA
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OPPORTUNITIES

We need to transform our Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 (ECS–12) education system to make sure Alberta's students are prepared for the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century.

Albertans take great pride in the quality education that our students receive. Our ECS–12 education system has long been recognized internationally for the quality of our programs, innovative teaching practices, and overall excellence in student learning. However, an education system's past success does not guarantee its future success – especially in a world that is changing more quickly than anyone could have predicted.

Our education system must both provide an inclusive environment where each student belongs, and equip them with the attitudes, skills, knowledge, and competencies they need to be successful in tomorrow's economy.

In addition to helping young Albertans fulfill their individual potential and become self-reliant, contributing members of society, the ECS–12 education system also aligns with and supports key Government of Alberta strategic priorities, such as the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy which will help give an external, big-picture perspective on securing the province's long-term prosperity.

The continued development of a highly skilled, knowledgeable, innovative and productive workforce is critical to ensuring that Alberta sustains its competitive advantage in a global economy, allowing the province to attract investment, and high value-added industries. Alongside its role in strengthening the economy, the ECS–12 education system will continue to teach the qualities and characteristics of citizenship which are essential to building communities across Alberta.

Transformative change refers to changing the education system by re-examining student needs, how we teach students, what we teach them, how to better engage communities in educating students and how research can be harnessed to inform change. This process involves a holistic and integrated approach that aligns the efforts of all stakeholders, including Alberta Education, parents, teachers, school boards and communities, to create positive change for our students.

Transforming a complex system, such as education, requires leadership, effective planning and commitment to goals and strategies. All education stakeholders, including Alberta Education, need to model behaviours that demonstrate a commitment to change.

This *Action Agenda* serves as a companion document to *Education's 2011–14 Business Plan (Business Plan)* and:

- states the vision and values that will guide the ministry and the entire education sector as we engage with Albertans in collaborative change;
- elaborates on strategic directions for the future of ECS–12 education;
- provides additional information on goals and priority initiatives in the Business Plan;
- describes the "Action On" initiatives that form the building blocks for change; and
- describes a collaborative approach that involves working with all Albertans.

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Alberta Education's vision and values will guide the Ministry and its partners in meeting its core businesses and goals in the operation and transformation of ECS–12 education in Alberta.

VISION

All students are inspired to achieve success and fulfillment as engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit.

VALUES

Opportunity
Students are exposed to rich learning experiences that enable them to discover their passions and achieve their highest potential.

Fairness
Students have access to the programs, support services, and instructional excellence needed to achieve desired outcomes.

Citizenship
Students have pride in their community and culture. They have a sense of belonging and work to improve both the community and the world.

Choice
Students have a choice of both programs and methods of learning.

Diversity
Students' differing needs, cultures, and abilities are respected and valued within inclusive learning environments.

Excellence
Students, teachers, and governors achieve high standards.

STRATEGIC POLICY DIRECTIONS

The following strategic policy directions will focus activities that support both the operational needs of the system while enabling an informed transformation of ECS–12 education in Alberta:

> **Rethinking student needs**

In Alberta, all students are valued; addressing their diverse learning needs in an inclusive way is crucial. Part of addressing these diverse learning needs means that we need to find ways to personalize learning and provide learning opportunities with flexible timing and pacing in a range of learning environments, while maintaining high student expectations.

> **Rethinking what we're teaching in the 21st Century**

We need a curriculum that focuses on the competencies young people require in the 21st century. We need to help students discover their passions and strengths so that they enjoy rewarding careers and a high quality of life.
We also need to continue to prepare students to be responsible citizens so that they can build and strengthen their communities.

> **Rethinking excellence in teaching students**

Teachers have a critical role in creating positive learning environments and addressing student needs. It is vital that teachers be able to reflect upon, refresh, and develop new instructional practices so that they are better able to meet student needs.

> **Rethinking how we engage with communities**

New approaches need to be developed to further strengthen school – community relationships. Governance practices need to better engage and represent Alberta's families and communities at the local level. Communities and parents need to have more opportunities and be encouraged to become more involved with their local schools and in what's happening with their children's education.

> **Rethinking research**

Alberta's education community needs to harness the power of research to continue to be on the leading edge of educational practice and benefit from innovation in other parts of the world. This will enable better evidence-based decision making in educational policy and programming.

ACTION ON

ACTION ON INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT BUSINESS PLAN GOAL 3

Education's 2011–14 Business Plan together with this Action Agenda, outline a comprehensive program for educational change. The following describes the priority Action On initiatives that support and complement the Business Plan goals:

1 GOAL ONE: SUCCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

Students are successful in school and acquire the attitudes, skills and knowledge they need for the 21st century challenges they face once they leave grade 12. Successful students will also possess the competencies needed for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship. Initiatives that support this goal include:

ACTION ON...CURRICULUM

> **Curriculum standards and process redesign:**

"Engaging curriculum that inspires every student every day". Provide improved supports for 21st century students by redesigning standards and guidelines for curriculum (programs of study, balanced assessment tools and learning and teaching resources) and the associated curriculum development processes.

> **21st Century competencies:**

Review the Student Learning Outcomes in the Ministerial Order on the Goals and Standards Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta to ensure a focus on competencies, including the attitudes, skills and knowledge, for all students in the 21st century.

> **Strategic review of locally developed courses (LDC):**

The review will help assess whether LDCs, in their current form and administration, meet student needs, provide options for innovation and responsiveness, and align with the ministry's strategic direction for the future.

2 GOAL TWO: TRANSFORMED EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

The ministry will be open to new and innovative ideas that transform the delivery of programming and supports to enable student learning. The ministry and its stakeholders and partners will jointly develop leadership capacity within the education sector workforce, enrich teacher competency standards, and develop strategies to provide the infrastructure and technology to support the success of Alberta students. Initiatives that support this goal include:

ACTION ON...INCLUSION

To create an inclusive education system that helps ensure success for all students, an approach to implementing inclusive education has been developed that consists of the following elements:

> **Communicating high expectations for all students:**
Define high expectations for all students.

> **Understanding and responding to student strengths and needs:**
Describe a Continuum of Supports and Services Guidelines to establish a consistent approach for responding to student strengths and needs.

> **Identifying resources:**
Create a funding model to support the continuum of supports and services.

> **Accessing supports and services:**
Describe access to supports and services at the regional and school delivery levels.

> **Measuring success:**
Develop measures and reporting mechanisms for collaboration and student success.

> **Capacity:**
Support building capacity of staff in the Education Ministry, other ministries, school authorities and community partners.

> **Collaborative practices:**
Develop tools and resources to support the use of collaborative practices based on wraparound principles.

ACTION ON...TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

- **School leadership:**
  Implement the School Leadership Framework to strengthen school leadership capacity.
- **Professional learning:**
  Develop a framework for coordinated, comprehensive professional learning.
- **Teacher induction:**
  Support beginning teachers through a teacher induction program.
- **Northern Student Teacher Bursary:**
  Implement the Northern Student Teacher Bursary program to attract teachers to northern communities.
- **Foreign prepared teachers:**
  Implement a "Bridging to employment" for foreign teachers program.
- **Career and Technology Studies (CTS) bridging:**
  Implement a CTS bridging program to increase the supply of CTS teachers.
- **Teaching profession:**
  Elevate and promote the teaching profession to attract the best and brightest to careers in education.
- **Teaching Quality Standard (TQS):**
  Revise the Teaching Quality Standard.

ACTION ON...LEGISLATION

> **Education Act:**

Lead the development of a new Education Act.

> **Regulations:**

Review existing, or newly required, regulations to support the new Education Act.

> **Policy:**

Lead the development of transformational system-wide policy resulting from Inspiring Education, Inspiring Action, Setting the Direction, and other initiatives that align with the development of a new Education Act.

> **Separate school establishment:**

Coordinate and facilitate a process to involve stakeholder input on separate school district establishment process.

ACTION ON...RESEARCH

> **Framework:**

Develop an Education Research Framework to enhance research and innovation capacity to improve teaching and learning.

> **Alberta Initiative for School Improvement:**

Transform teacher practice through innovative AISI projects.

3 GOAL THREE: SUCCESS FOR FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT (FNMI) STUDENTS

The ministry is transforming its relationships with First Nations, Métis leaders and communities as well as with the federal government to collaboratively engage FNMI parents and students in learning in order to eliminate the achievement gap between FNMI and non-FNMI students. The ministry supports FNMI student success by developing culturally relevant learning resources and program supports to meet their unique needs, by increasing the number of FNMI professionals in the education workforce, and by continuing to focus on improving FNMI student success through appropriate accountability mechanisms. Initiatives that support this goal include:

ACTION ON...FNMI SUCCESS

> **Memorandum of understanding (MOU) for first nation education:**

Work with the federal government and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs to collectively realize the common vision for First Nations students to achieve or exceed the full educational outcomes, levels and successes of all other Alberta students.

> **FNMI Education Partnership Council:**

Implement a joint action plan focusing on:

- Ensuring FNMI students are ready and able to learn
- Engaging parents and families to support children and youth
- Teacher education.

> **Northland School Division:**

The Northland School Division will implement improvement strategies that focus on:

- Developing English and Aboriginal language and numeracy;
- Improving student attendance; and
- Working with a community based team to strengthen parental engagement with schools by improving communication and trust.

> **FNMI collaborative frameworks:**

Support implementation of FNMI Conceptual Collaborative Frameworks whereby FNMI parents and communities develop outcomes, strategies, and measures designed to improve FNMI student success in school.

> **Teacher Education Program:**

Implement the second year of the four-year Community-Based (FNMI) Teacher Education Program to increase the number of FNMI teachers in the workforce and explore the expansion of the program with urban participants.

ENGAGEMENT.

As we – Alberta Education, school boards, educators, stakeholders, parents and students – embark on this journey, the successful transformation of ECS–12 education in Alberta will depend on:

- the joint development of a well planned, student focused and effectively executed transformation action plan;
- the entire education sector sharing and demonstrating a commitment to the transformation process;
- the Ministry and stakeholders sharing leadership and taking initiative within the scope of their respective mandates; and
- all parties being open minded, innovative, and willing to examine traditional assumptions and consider new ways of doing things.

The following generalized process will ensure that change is manageable over the long-term, and that foundational decisions and mechanisms are in place before other work is completed.

CULTURAL/ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

> **Lead by example**

The ministry will lead the change process by modeling transformative, collaborative, and innovative behaviours that engage the entire education sector in the transformation of the education system.

> **Foster partnerships, cohesion and commitment**

The ministry will work with the education sector to develop a common understanding of transformation and embrace a culture of 'we' – establishing long-term, mutually supportive relationships and working as partners to identify areas of change.

> **Embed community participation**

Ensure communities are engaged in the transformation of ECS–12 education by eliminating barriers to involvement, encouraging generative dialogue and welcoming everyone's contributions and influence.

PROGRAM CHANGE

> **Revitalize education programs, assessment and supports**

Curriculum, including assessment and education supports, will be comprehensively reviewed and modified as needed to incorporate holistic perspectives that allow for timely evolution to meet changing needs.

> **Build the mechanisms to achieve transformation**

Align roles and responsibilities, governance structures, and resources throughout the entire education sector to enable 21st century learning.

JOINT IMPLEMENTATION

> **Transformed ECS–12 education delivery**

Recognizing that change requires time to achieve results, jointly develop and implement a plan for the delivery of education programs, supports and services that ensure equitable access to personalized learning opportunities in order to meet diverse learning needs and fulfill the potential of all students. Provide for ongoing dialogue and engagement in order to facilitate continuous improvement throughout the education system.

EVALUATION

> **Evaluate outcomes**

The ministry will work jointly with the education sector to develop and implement an evaluation model to systematically measure, on a continuous basis, the degree to which the goals of transformation have been met and their impacts on students and the education system in general. This will include, for example, the assessment of transformational processes, mechanisms, programs, policies, and initiatives in a manner that allows for ongoing adjustment and modification as needed.

WE ENVISION.

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